

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of allowance of claims 21-31.

Applicants are further grateful for the indication of allowability of claims 15-17 if they are rewritten in independent form.

Claims 14-15 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 12-13 and 16-31 are pending in the present application. Claims 12, 16, and 17 have been amended to further particularly point out and distinctly claim subject matter regarded as the invention. Support for the claim amendment can be found in the specification and claims. No new matter has been added.

The 35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejection

The Office Action rejected Claims 12-14 and 18-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Younker (US 5,951,301) (“Younker”) in view of Bailey (US 5,800,179) (“Bailey”). Without admitting that Younker and Bailey are prior art and reserving the right to establish that they are not, Applicants respectfully disagree with the reason of the rejection.

However, in order to expedite the allowance of the present application, Applicants have incorporated the allowable claimed subject matter of Claim 15 into Claims 12 and rewritten Claim 17 in independent claim. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claims 12 and 17 are now in condition for allowance in view of Younker and Bailey under § 103.

Moreover, if independent claims are valid, the claims that depend from the independent claims should also be valid as matter of law. See Jenric/Pentron, Inc. v. Dillon Co., 205 F. 3d

1377, 1382 (Fed. Cir. 2000). Since Claims 13, 16, and 18-20 depend from Claim 12, Claims 13, 16, and 18-20 should also be patentable.

Conclusion

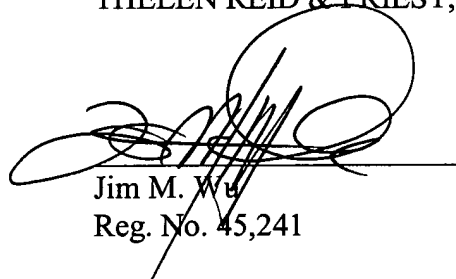
It is believed that this Amendment places the above-identified patent application into condition for allowance. Early favorable consideration of this Amendment is earnestly solicited.

Applicants thank the Examiner for careful examination. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, an interview would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. Please charge any additional required fee or credit any overpayment not otherwise paid or credited to our deposit account No. 50-1698.

Respectfully submitted,

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